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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Lord, our refuge and strength, You have called our Senators to this place and time. May they be mindful of the responsibility to be faithful stewards of their vocation. Protect them in the hour of temptation so that they will exercise self-control and glorify You. Lord, use their talents and skills to strengthen our Nation and to bless the people of our world. Infuse them with such a spirit of gratitude that they will offer thanks to You by living according to Your will. Remind them that You are with them and will guide them.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 8, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A.

COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COONS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate is now considering the motion to proceed to the Stop Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act. The time until noon will be divided between the two parties, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the second 30 minutes.

At noon there will be a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 2343, which is the Stop Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act. Following that vote, the Senate will recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for our weekly caucus meetings.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 2050, H.R. 2240, H.R. 4628, AND H.R. 4849

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand there are four bills at the desk due for a second reading, and I would ask the Chair to move these forward.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2050) to authorize the continued use of certain water diversions located on National Forest System land in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in the State of Idaho, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 2240) to authorize the exchange of land or interest in land between Lowell National Historical Park and the city of Lowell in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 4628) to extend student loan interest rates for undergraduate Federal Direct Stafford Loans.

A bill (H.R. 4849) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to issue commercial use authorizations to commercial stock operators for operations in designated wilderness within the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now object to further proceedings with respect to each of these bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the last 2 weeks, Senate Republicans have repeatedly claimed they support efforts to keep interest rates low for Federal student loans. In fact, Presidential nominee Mr. Romney has said the same. There is only one way to prove this, and that is to end the needless filibuster of Democrats' plan to stop rates from doubling this summer.

Democrats have proposed legislation to freeze student loan interest rates at current levels for a year without adding a single penny to the deficit. Our plan adds no new taxes. I repeat, Mr. President: Our plan adds no new taxes. It would simply stop wealthy Americans from avoiding the taxes they already owe. Our legislation would prevent 7 million students from paying \$1,000 more over the life of each of their loans. Yet Republicans appear poised to filibuster this worthy measure. They are sending a clear message they would rather protect wealthy tax dodgers—and that is what they are—than help promising students achieve their dreams of higher education.

Republicans will try to explain away their "no" votes by claiming they oppose the way the legislation is paid for. They propose radical cuts to a preventive health care fund instead—a proposal they know we oppose.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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